

Singapore Pastor Uses Magic Shows To Introduce Gospel to Unchurched

Illusionist Lawrence Khong says the real pulpits of the world are not found in churches but in the entertainment field

The art of illusion has opened new doors for Lawrence Khong, senior pastor of the 10,000-member Faith Community Baptist Church in Singapore and executive producer of the Magic of Love musical. Khong and his crew of 40 wrapped up their eight-city U.S. tour in June and will travel to Japan and China for performances this fall.

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Although U.S. ticket sales were disappointing, the feedback has been encouraging. "It is an outstanding show by any standardóbut trying to make a dent in the commercial sector is very challenging," said Khong, who has been performing magic since the age of 10.

Magic of Love has attracted more than 160,000 people throughout Asia since it made its debut in 2001.

Khong said his goal was to produce a show containing good Christian values that can compete with some of the best shows in the world. Magic of Love tells the story of a father and daughter who are bonded together by their love for magic and eventually are torn apart by their greed for fame and fortune. The show stars Khong and his daughter, Priscilla Khong, who also is a magician.

About five years ago, Khong said God showed him that "the real pulpits of the world are not found in churches." His church

launched an entertainment company called Gateway Entertainment that has produced several movies and TV serials, and has underwritten Khongís magic shows.

“God has called me to get into the entertainment world and take it back for the Lord,” he said. “I don’t think I can take it back for the Lord completely, but at least I contribute my share.”

Khong has long been criticized for using magicówhile attending Dallas Theological Seminary in the 1970s and in recent years as the pastor of a charismatic megachurch.

“Magic takes you into a fantasy world, where the audience tends to momentarily suspend their unbelief,” he said. “The danger is, you can tell them whatever you want, and they will believe you.”

Though not easily offended, Khong said he hasnít received any negative comments from U.S. believers who saw the show. “You canít get too upset when people donít understand you,” he said. “Otherwise, you’ll never get going.”

C. Peter Wagner, presiding apostle of the International Coalition of Apostles (ICA), of which Khong is a member, attended a Magic of Love performance in Dallas with his wife, Doris. Afterward, he sent an e-mail of his thoughts to ICA members.

“One of the things that Doris and I wanted to check out was the spiritual cleanliness of this show,” Wagner wrote. “When demonic forces are present, [Doris] usually discerns it. Magic of Love, much to our delight, reflected nothing of the occult.

It was good, clean fun, with Lawrence and Priscilla demonstrating incredible skills that are fascinating to watch.”

These days, Khong is away from Faith Community nearly six months out of the year; however, the church continues to grow. “I’m teaching my people not to see what I do as two different things,” he said. “They are praying for this tour just as they would pray for an evangelistic outreach.”

Khong was awarded the Master Magician Award in Las Vegas in 2002. His wife, Nina Khong, serves as producer of Magic of Love. She is a medical doctor and deputy senior pastor of Faith Community Baptist Church.

Carol Chapman Stertzner in Dallas